

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 MANAGU 00272 201402Z

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FM AMEMBASSY MANAGUA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8881

AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA

AMEMBASSY PANAMA

AMEMBASSY SAN JOSE

AMEMBASSY SAN SALVADOR

AMEMBASSY TEGUCIGALPA

AMEMBASSY TOKYO

C O N F I D E N T I A L MANAGUA 0272

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: PGOV, US, DR, JA, NU

SUBJECT: MILITARY MEN APPOINTED TO KEY POSTS

SUMMARY: PRESIDENT SOMOZA APPOINTED RETIRED GENERALS
AS AMBASSADORS TO JAPAN AND PRESS SECRETARY STIMULATING
SPECULATION ABOUT THE INCREASING MILITARY CAST OF THE REGIME.
END SUMMARY

1. PRESIDENT SOMOZA NAMED BRIG. GEN. (RETIRED) ROGER BERMUDEZ AS SECRETARY OF INFORMATION AND PRESS ON JANUARY 13 ENDING A FIVE MONTH PERIOD WHEN VICE MINISTER FOR URBAN PLANNING IVAN OSORIO PETERS HAD DONE DOUBLE DUTY. OSORIO HAD REPLACED PREVIOUS INCUMBENT EFRAIN HUEZO WHO HAD BEEN OUSTED AS A RESULT OF SOMOZA'S UNHAPPINESS WITH THE HANDLING OF THE JACK ANDERSON ARTICLES ON SOMOZA'S BUSINESS DEALINGS (MANAGUA 3482). BIG, BLUFF AND HIGHLY SOCIABLE, BERMUDEZ IS CLOSE TO THE PRESIDENT, HAVING SERVED AS CHIEF OF MILITARY HOUSEHOLD 1967-70, DURING SOMOZA'S FIRST PRESIDENTIAL TERM. HE HAS BEEN INVOLVED IN NUMEROUS BUSINESS ENTERPRISES,
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PAGE 02 MANAGU 00272 201402Z

BOTH BEFORE AND AFTER HE RETURNED FROM ACTIVE DUTY. HE HAD

BEEN HOLDING A SINECURE ON THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF THE NATIONAL ENERGY AND LIGHT ENTERPRISE (ENALUF) WHEN HE WAS NAMED TO THE PRESS SECRETARY JOB.

2. ON JAN. 14, MAJ. GEN. JULIO GUTIERREZ WAS NAMED AMBASSADOR TO JAPAN. GUTIERREZ HAD BEEN SERVING AS DEFENSE ATTACHE IN WASHINGTON SINCE 1966 AT THE TIME OF HIS APPOINTMENT. HE HAD PREVIOUSLY LED THE NICARAGUAN CONTINGENT OF THE INTER-AMERICAN PEACE FORCE IN THE DOMINICAN REPUBLIC IN 1965. AN ATTRACTIVE AND CAPABLE PERSONALITY GUTIERREZ HAS A REPUTATION FOR POLITICAL INTRIGUE AND HIS NAME HAS BEEN MENTIONED IN CONNECTION WITH EVERY REAL OR IMAGINED PLOT AGAINST SOMOZA SINCE 1966. THIS REPUTATION MAY HAVE BEEN RESPONSIBLE IN PART FOR AN ASSIGNMENT 11,000 MILES AWAY FROM NICARAGUA.

3. WHILE BOTH BERMUDEZ AND GUTIERREZ HAVE GOOD REPUTATIONS OUTSIDE OF THE NATIONAL GUARD, THE NAMING OF TWO MORE MILITARY MEN TO PRESTIGIOUS CIVILIAN POSTS HAS RAISED SOME QUESTIONS BOTH IN AND OUTSIDE GOVERNMENT CIRCLES. VICE MINISTER OF GOVERNMENT ADOLFO MUNIZ OTERO TOLD POLOFF THAT THE APPOINTMENTS HAVE CREATED SOME GRUMB-
LING AMONG LIBERAL PARTY NOTABLES WHO SEE THEIR RELATIVE POSITION CLOSE TO THE THRONE ATTENUATED BY SOMOZA'S CONTINUING INCLINATION TO FILL PATRONAGE WITH MILITARY, RATHER THAN PARTY. CONSERVATIVE PARTY VICE PRESIDENT ALBERTO CHAMORRBD#2&3\$.7,8" SENTIMENTS AND COMMENTED THAT SOMOZA SEES THE NEED TO FORTIFY THE GUARD'S SENSE OF PERSONAL OBLIGATION BY AWARDING SUCH PLUMS, BECAUSE OF HIS CURRENT PRIORITY CONCERN WITH INTERNAL SECURITY. OTHERS HAVE SUGGESTED THAT IN THE CASE OF THE PRESS SECRETARY POSITION BOTH THE INTERIM APPOINTMENT OF IVAN OSXRIO, WHO ALREADY HAD HIS HANDS FULL WITH URBAN RECONSTRUCTION, AND THE PERMANENT APPOINTMENT OF BERMUDEZ HAVE DEMONSTRATED THE SCARCITY OF SOMOCISTAS WHO ARE BOTH QUALIFIED AND ENJOY THE HIGH PERSONAL TRUST OF THE PRESIDENT.

4. THE INCIDENCE OF RETIRED MILITARY PERSONNEL AMONG THE TOP 32 CIVILIAN POSTS HAS BEEN INCREASED FROM 4 TO 8
CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 03 MANAGU 00272 201402Z

SINCE THE BEGINNING OF SOMOZA'S SECOND PRESIDENTIAL TERM 13 MONTHS AGO AS HAS THEIR NUMBER OF SINECURES ON THE BOARDS OF DIRECTORS OF AUTONOMOUS AGENCIES, ETC. WITH A SIGNIFICANT GROUP OF SENIOR GUARD OFFICERS EXPECTED TO RETIRE ON FEBRUARY 1, THESE RECENT APPOINTMENTS HAVE INCURRED SPECULATION THAT THE PERCENTAGE WILL SOON BECOME LARGER STILL.
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